

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: WALLY J. BIRK
INTERVIEWER: GABE GABRIELSKY
DATE: APRIL 3, 1989
PLACE: NORTH ADAMS**

**G = GABE
W = WALLY**

TAPE SG-NA-T005

G: April 3rd, 1989. I'm in my offices at the Western Gateway Heritage State Park in North Adams, Massachusetts and we're here interviewing Wally Birk about his experiences as an executive for the Sprague Electric Corporation.

I gave you a kind of sample outline questionnaire that we use. Some of those questions obviously apply to you, some of them don't. The way that we, the way that we use the questionnaire (--) Is that uh, is that mine?

W: Well it's [few words unclear]. I brought that along because there's an article about MoCA in there. Have you seen it?

G: Oh, oh yes. Yes. Thank you, but I'd never, somebody tore it out. So I was not familiar with the cover.

W: Do you want the whole addition?

G: I think, I think it might be useful. Thank you very much.

W: Umhm. It's only semi-flattering, but uh (--)

G: Oh I wouldn't even, I wouldn't call it that. I thought, I mean, I thought it was pretty tough on MoCA, but it was even tougher on the town.

W: And also on the individual I thought.

G: Yeah, it was tough on [Cranz?] but it was even tougher on the Mayor. [W: Yeah] I mean

this stuff about you know, his polyester suits and eating oatmeal for brunch and stuff like that. Real cheap shots.

W: Yeah. Well you got the same reaction as I did. [G: Laughs] It seemed to raise a few legitimate questions, but seemed to be very substantially the way you described it.

G: Yeah. No I, I, it makes Cranz seem like a really scary figure. [Laughs] You know, really flying to Germany for you know, for lunch and back. Um, many of the (--) This is sort of (--) The questionnaire however is a kind of idealized questionnaire. Basically what it is, the point of the questionnaire is to get the narrator talking. And uh, so that you'll find that obviously some questions on the questionnaire didn't apply to you. On the other hand there are going to be questions that weren't on the questionnaire that I'm going to be motivated to ask, simply because of the issues you raise. All right, you're aware of that. [W: Umhm] Okay, but we'll start where it starts, because that's important. Um, where were you born?

W: In South Western Germany. A place called the Black Forest.

G: Uh huh. Um, were your grandparents from that region?

W: Yes.

G: Um, do you have any recollection of your grandparents?

W: Yes, some. I visited over there at different times. [I: Uh huh] The great grandparents they had passed away already.

G: What did, what did your grandparents do?

W: They were typical local people. The economy of the area at that time was a turn of the century type of typical European structure. That is they worked in a local plant, which happened to be the Honner Accordion and Harmonica [latter part of sentence unclear].

G: Uh huh, very famous. Honner Harmonicas are the best harmonicas in the world.

W: Yeah, well they're almost among the last as well.

G: Yeah.

W: And that involved also sort of cottage industry where they took some home. And then at the same time again as the structure at least in Germany was where they followed the [Polyonic] codes rather than the Saxon codes in the north, which meant that property was evenly split among children. Meant that all the people had little bits and pieces of parcels of ground all around the town and at different places in the town and they farmed those. And so that it was partially agrarian in that sense and partially industrial work.

G: Uh huh. When were you born?

W: 1925.

G: Um, what was the um, what was the closest big city to where (--)

W: Where I was born you mean? [I: Yeah] Or where I grew up?

G: Yeah, where you were born?

W: The closest big city probably would be Stutgar.

G: Uh huh, uh huh. And when did you come to the United States? What were the circumstances of your coming to the United States?

W: Well the period after the war was difficult for those over there and typical of millions of the Europeans. My family emigrated here when I was four years old.

G: Uh huh.

W: Which would have been in 1929.

G: Yeah, yeah that's quite a bit (--) You mean after the first World War you're talking about? [W: Yeah] Yeah, umhm. Uh, so that basically your recollections of growing up are in the United States?

W: Yes.

G: Where did your parents emigrate to?

W: New Brunswick, New Jersey.

I: Uh huh., And how long did you live in that area?

W: Until I was about, not quite twelve, meaning several years.

G: Yeah, uh huh. So you have some recollection of anything?

W: Oh yeah.

G: What did your parents do for a living?

W: My father worked in a milk company at that period. With the depression having just arrived and (--)

G: American Valley Farms.

W: They had also lost what little money they had in the banks. Salaries being cut. My father bought a small store in Newark, New Jersey where a relative lived and knew of the situation. And then went into business for that. He also [I believe] would up with a, oh I guess you'd call it a Superette after many years and in a couple of different other towns. So that the great bulk of my youth then is [few words unclear] was as a small business owner.

G: Uh huh, of a, of a grocery, grocery store chain. A small chain of grocery stores.

W: Well ultimately it wound up that, yeah.

G: Uh huh, uh huh, based in Newark.

W: No it then (--) Well in Newark for probably um, about ten years, or a dozen years and then a few years in Belleville, New Jersey and the last several years on the eastern shore of Maryland.

G: He was really moving around a lot. What were the circumstances of that?

W: Well the uh, the move to Belleville would be, it's not significant in terms of describing anything.

G: That's really the sticks though. I've been to Belleville.

W: Belleville, New Jersey?

G: Yes.

W: No, it's just right.

G: I grew up in New, I grew up in New Jersey.

W: It's right on the border of [I: Pennsylvania] of Newark. No, no, no. I think we're getting to the wrong place. It is adjoined Newark on the north side.

G: Uh huh. I was thinking about [unclear]. I'm sorry.

W: Okay. And then the eastern shore of Maryland, my sister had married a man from that area and then he moved down there in his last several years.

I: Uh huh, uh huh. What are your own earliest memories?

W: New Brunswick of course. [I: Uh huh] School and my cousin was there and then.

G: What, does anything stand out about life in that period? So you're talking about the 1930's I guess.

W: Only in retrospect that New Brunswick was rather semi-rural at the time. We lived on the

edge of town, New Brunswick at the time I think was about 1/3, or certainly partly half of what it is today. And so everything was relatively rural about me. And even though it was a difficult time other than of course hearing the parents speak that things were difficult, I never experienced it, or had any feeling of unease, or worry at the time. It always (--)

G: You mean about the economic situation?

W: Yeah, yeah. Well it transmitted itself in the sense that about 1/2 mile away from where I lived was a city dump. And uh, something they called Hooperville where [I: Uh huh] some of the very bottom of the economic ladder had moved. In the history books it describes them. And that to make a few pennies to buy a bar of candy, or a bottle of soda I use to have to compete with these people once in awhile in that we use to collect deposit bottles.

G: Uh huh. Right, right.

W: That's a memory of that period.

G: Umhm, umhm. Are you or were you religious? Was your family ever religious? Do you attend church?

W: Well we still do individually and as a family. Not on a completely regular basis, but fairly frequently.

G: What's your affiliation?

W: I'm actually Lutheran, but I, because my wife is Roman Catholic we... and there wasn't a Lutheran Church for many years when we first moved to the Bennington area, generally went to one or the other of the Roman Catholic churches [G: Uh huh] in Bennington.

G: Uh huh. That's actually fairly unusual for a South German, right, to be, to be Lutheran?

W: No.

G: Usually [few words unclear] kind of thing?

W: No. What you might be referring to is the Austria or Hungarian empire was very strongly Roman Catholic, which perhaps a hundred miles away. [G: Yeah] But uh, Germany itself in that part, then going up to [Wurms] and so forth, that was the strong hold in the center of [G: Of Lutheranism] of yeah, the reformation.

G: Yeah, right. Um, how far did you go in school?

W: All the way through, including a MBA at New York University.

G: You went straight through uh (--)

W: Well the MBA I got nights and commuting to New York from New Jersey when, while I was still living in New Jersey. I graduated from Syracuse University. [Uh huh] That was full time, day time as a veteran after the war. Although I had started before the war, then went into the war, came back.

G: And went back on GI Bill.

W: Right.

G: Uh huh. Um. And what was your first job? After collecting (--)

W: Well by that what do you mean?

G: Well, after collecting bottles?

W: Oh, after collecting [unclear] was my first job. After collecting the bottles, in infinite variety, but uh, the first job and I guess you could call a job (--)

G: I think sometimes summer jobs are important, or you know, fairly regular after school jobs are important.

W: Yes. Well the first that might fit that description was in 1940 when the impact of the war had already begun. I worked in a place called the [Lacquana] Laundry. It was the summer. They were a chain of laundries and handled only commercial laundry. Restaurants, hotels and so forth. Huge cleaning vats and oh I'd say two thirds of the help was actually colored. [I: Uh huh] And that was quite an experience.

G: This was after school?

W: Yeah. Even though I worked for my dad most of the time he thought it would be good experience to go out and do something of that kind for part of a summer. So about, I guess it was about six weeks of one summer at that time, because they paid all of 25 cents an hour at the time.

G: Uh huh. This was in Newark, or Belleville, or?

W: It was Newark.

G: Uh huh. Was this related to the [Lacquana] railroad, or (--)

W: If it was at that time I wasn't aware of it. There was a [Lacquana] railroad in that area. It uh, it might have been, but there weren't all the ties that there are today as corporations. I think it was probably just the use of the name, though I don't know.

G: So is that, so is that right before you uh (--)

W: It was 1940.

G: Was that right before you went away to college, or shortly before?

W: A couple of years before.

G: Uh huh. And what is your next significant job after that?

W: Well the first job out of college, although I worked at different things aside from working for my dad all the time in the interim the other somewhat more meaningful work was at the W.T. Grant Company, which is defunct now, but if you remember them they were (--)

G: Was it 5&10's?

W: Uh, [G: little higher up] Yeah, mostly in soft goods. [G: Right] And I was their forte. They subsequently went bankrupt about ten years ago, but I only worked for them for about two years. The idea basically being to learn the chain merchandising business then go back with my dad's growing business. But I didn't. It convinced me I wanted to go into industry instead. [G: Uh huh, uh huh] Although I (--)

G: That you did, that you did right after college? Work for W.T. Grant?

W: Yeah, right.

G: Do you remember much about your job at the Lacquana Laundry Company?

W: Other than the way I described it, the type of work, the type of people, the type of conditions.

G: What did you actually do? Do you remember that?

W: Well I filled in at a few things, because the labor pool was a lower level of education and stability. But primarily I was what they called the loader and a sorter. The big bags that came in off the trucks you had to dump on these huge tables and then separate the things. [G: Uh huh] And the things sometimes were alive, [G: right, yes] into the proper piles to go into the proper tumblers for the right cycle of washing. And once in awhile I was on the washing machines taking what had come from that table and putting it in the washing machines, but then usually that always had to be under the supervision of someone experienced that knew how to do the few things that controlled and regulated the washer.

G: This is interesting to me because my mother did a very similar kind of work in the Hotel Pennsylvania [W: Uh huh] I guess.

W: In New York?

G: Right, across from Penn Station.

W: Across from Madison Square there?

G: Well in those days it was Penn Station. Yeah. In I guess the late 20's I guess, something like that. [W: Umhm] Um, I interviewed her about this sort of thing at one point.

W: It was good experience.

G: Uh huh. And what? When you worked at Grants you took this job at Grants after you graduated from Syracuse.

W: Got out of school in 49, right, yes.

G: Yeah. And what was the specific nature of your work for Grants?

W: Well you started as a trainee literally. And that meant you worked in different departments, from the freight department downstairs right up into the office and in some departments.

G: In a particular store right? Uh, (--)

W: Yeah, at that phase. [G: yeah] The nature of the business was (--)

G: This wasn't in the central office? You did work in the central office?

W: No, no, they put you right out into stores. [G: uh huh] And the training period was I think three months. It was a bit variable, but essentially two to three months is what they generally applied and saw to it you got around to the different functions and activities. Then you came down on the floor as a department manager and they let you run a department, subject to the supervision of the manager of course. And you did the buying, the displaying, the [I: Uh huh] the pricing and so forth. The typical retail merchandising activities. And sometimes they would keep you in a store long enough to do that in a couple of departments, which I also did and then they moved you up usually somewhere within about a year to something called a floorman. And that was you were responsible for a section of this store and a group of departments. I stayed that long. [I: Uh huh] And that entailed usually about two years as such, but in the interim you could have been moving to different stores, which I did.

G: You were in that position then where you were controlling a number of departments in a particular store?

W: Right. And then there were um, training lessons, written test which you had to take.

G: At every level you would?

W: Uh, at every level, but also on the various different subjects. So that when you finished this course you were theoretically knowledgeable enough about the total store's operation to qualify [I: right] for Assistant Store Manager. [G: Uh huh] And I had finished that and I was ready for

Assistance of Store Manager. My next move had been promised as Assistant Store Manager in another store. And by this time I had actually been to three stores already in [G: Uh huh] upstate New York and was headed for West Virginia and then I left. [G: Uh huh] Came back to the New Jersey area and joined the company down there. So I'd been with them about 2 1/2 years.

G: Uh huh. What? When you were like this Floor Manager what was the actual, what did you do? What did (--)

W: Well you still the same as you did as a Department Manager in the individual departments, except that where you had and you didn't always have a experienced and a capable departmental person, but where you did you let them do it and you supervised it. You might have made suggestions or recommended changes and so forth, but that phased out. And then the display of the merchandise and the staffing of the people and their hours, and the proper coverage for the traffic. And there were substantial differences between the low merchandising part of the year of January/February as against the Christmas season, November/December type of thing. And so essentially it was sort of a store within a store that you ran again, of course subject to the guidance and control of the store manager.

G: What about um, in a position like that where there (--). You don't mention, or at least you didn't emphasize very much personnel as an issue. Was there a, were there (--) Did management entail management of personnel?

W: Yes, but personnel having to, and particularly in the retail business, having taken on all of the sophisticated views and practices of today. This essence was to motivate them to take an interest in maximizing the sales. And offer suggestions, whether that be that something wasn't selling and should be priced a little lower, or something was selling very well but wasn't displayed in the place or in the way that they thought if it were changed, moved to a front counter, or in a more convenient level the greater sale would result trying to develop the personnel and taking that interest. And being of course pleasant to the customers and fulfilling those aspects of the position.

G: Um, so it says that you leave W.T. Grants around the mid 50's sometime, right?

W: Uh, early 50's.

G: Early 50's, okay. And you come back to the northern or central New Jersey area, right?

W: Well yeah, in that I was transferred back because I was close to getting married and that was one of the reasons.

G: Uh huh, by the Grant Corporation?

W: By the Grant Corporation into the area.

G: Uh huh, but then you left that position?

W: I stayed there another year and then left.

G: Uh huh. And what position did you take then?

W: I went to a company called the Kingston Connelly Division of the Hoover Company, the vacuum cleaner people, but these people only made electric motors of all manner and kinds. And some tools, grinders and things that I thought (--)

G: This was in Newark?

W: No, this was in South Plainfield, New Jersey.

G: Uh huh, so you're coming back closer to New Brunswick.

W: North Plainfield, New Jersey. Sorry.

[Someone walks in and says, "they put it in the wrong mailbox"]

G: Thank you. Um, and so that was your first experience in industry as opposed to retailing. What kind of position did you have with them?

W: Well it started with what was called Sales Administrator, [G: uh huh], which was sales correspondence, serving the sales force and customers in a given area in terms of their orders, their technical questions, their requirements of whatever went on in the territory that they needed servicing or interphase in coordination with the Field Sales Force. And of course you reported to the Sales Management in terms of problems and in terms of again, recommendations. You did do some travel out to the territory with the salesman to meet some of the key customers when it was a problem situation, or if it was an opportunity type of situation, or just a good will type of visit. Then you reported on these things and made recommendations.

G: How did you end up eventually working for Sprague?

W: Well from that position, which was in North Plainfield, New Jersey and not far geographically from the Grant Company, the electronic industry was beginning to boom. And in a town called South Plainfield the biggest and best electronics components manufacturer in its type of field, which was a field such as Sprague was in, was called Cornell Dublier and I went there. Looking at what I presumed (--)

G: What were they making exactly?

W: Like Sprague, capacitors.

G: Capacitors? I don't remember them, because I use to (--)

W: Well they were bigger than Sprague at that time. [G: Uh huh]

Although in the aftermath subsequently I learned that the year after I joined Cornell Dublier, Sprague finally passed this Cornell Dublier. Cornell Dublier was the cadillac and the leader in it for many many years. [G: Uh huh] In fact they, a man name William Dublier, which was half of the name and Cornell Dublier was a merger that took place between a company called Cornell and Dublier company in the 30's, because of you know, the financial constraints of the time. One was very good marketing wise, one was very good research wise and both were hurting. So they put them together. [G: Umhm] And Mr. Dublier actually invented the capacitor. He was an Austrian, European. Interesting story in that too. But um, I joined them as said with the outlook in the electronics industry being what it was. And then I was with them a dozen years and I switched to Sprague while I was overseas with this Cornell Dublier Electronics.

G: What were you doing, marketing overseas?

W: I was uh, um, (--) Well for Cornell Dublier I was eastern hemisphere Marketing Manager. By that time I started (--)

G: Where were you stationed?

W: In Europe.

G: Where specifically?

W: In Germany.

G: In any particular city?

W: A city called Karlsruhe, [G: Uh huh] which was in southeastern Germany, about fifty miles south of Frankfurt.

G: So did you, did you grow up speaking German in your household?

W: No, I had lost that really in terms of uh, affluent and capable writing by that time, but if you knew a language once it was always partially still with you. And so I relearned it. I had been back to Germany before the war on a visit for some months. That had sort of refreshed it enough not to completely loose it. And then was back again at that time, which was still a longer period and the restoration of the language was largely relearning properly from the fluency point of view [G: right] in that when I first went over I had a German language professor come in everyday of the week for three hours. And after a few months it went down to one hour. Then after about three more months it was two or three times a week for an hour or two. And after six months I was done. And it was in a factory situation where um, many of the workers, although the professional people could all speak english and fluently, I had to deal with a lot of the factory people too. So I had to learn the language. And [G: so there was (--)] in between that combination, after several months, then living in the area of course and traveling and working (--)

G: This corporation was actually an international corporation. It has corp (--) It had factories

all over the world.

W: Uh yes, because Cornell, right. Cornell Dublier had been bought up by a company called Federal Pacific Electric, [G: That (unclear)] who in turn had bought up other companies. And they had companies in England under the ECC name if you know that is the name in the old electrical industry. And a company, a group called [Satche?] in uh (--) In fact downstairs in your visitor ledger I saw a name [unclear]. That is a one industry town and Satche is the industry, but it had all of these companies, yes. Also had operations in Latin America. And I went to Latin America for them first.

G: I should explain something to you. A couple of things. We're (--) My knowledge isn't just as an historian, as a matter of fact it's only one of my hats. I have a, long ago I got an associates degree in electronics. [W: Oh, oh, then you know where I will speak] As a kid (--) I was a kid (--) As a kid I always was building radios and always used Sprague capacitors, you know? Not only that, where I was doing this I grew up in Southern New Jersey. [Unclear] County, New Jersey. I lived for five years in New Brunswick. [W: Really?] Yeah, I worked at the [Delco?] Battery Plant, which is on New Jersey (--)

W: Where, what side of New Brunswick is this?

G: Well actually north Brunswick, which is in, which is south of New Brunswick.

W: Oh towards Sarahville, South River, up that way?

G: Well no, no. That's actually north. That's actually northeast. Actually south, going down towards Princeton actually, but [W: Oh okay] in that direction.

W: Well then you lived in the same part that I did.

G: Yeah, yeah.

W: Cause I lived just before you got to what was it? Sommerville or something? [G: Right, uh huh] It was the Raritan Canal [G: yeah] and St. Peter's Hospital and [G: yes, yes] Bugelow Park. That was [unclear].

G: Yeah, I knew the, you know, I knew the nurse for the Johnson baby and stuff like that.

W: How about that! Proverbial small world again.

G: Johnson (--) It was a (--) That was (--) The Johnson family was the New Brunswick what the Sprague family is to North Adams, you know. [W: Right, yes] Johnson and Johnson.

W: Good analogy.

G: Yeah. Um, so I'm very (--) I lived in, for a time I lived though actually in Jersey city. So

I'm (--) My father grew up in Union city. So that whole area.

W: Oh yeah, I've been down there too. So we have friends, even a relative live in Jersey city.

[G: Yeah, so I'm] We've retraced each others steps considerably.

G: Yeah, I'm very familiar with the uh, with the area. Also happen to be German American. I was brought up in a German Lutheran Church and that's [unclear].

W: I see. Well there's a lot of parallels. With a name like Gabrielsky you must have come from [Celasia?]

G: Yeah, right, right. It's very basically my father's family was Prussian. My mother's family was Low German.

W: Uh huh. Well it's the same as mine. My father was uh, father's family, but in the seventeen hundreds came from Prussia. [G: Uh huh] The mother's family actually came from the Tyrol in Austria in the sixteen hundreds.

G: Low Germany is the north coast right? The north, the northwest coast?

W: No, Low German, Low Germany is considered the southern part and the High German was considered the northern part basically with a big generalization.

G: Yeah, my grandfather would say, "there is nothing in american as beautiful as the Black Forest." [Laughs]

W: No, it was very attractive.

G: Speaking of which, I know this was an issue in World War I, but I'm wondering in terms of your own background. Um, did you ever experience, especially during World War II any kind of noticeable prejudice or discrimination on account of your ethnicity?

W: Not really. Maybe partially, because the area north that I grew up in and having come from that general area you must know that Newark was very heavily Italian. [G: Right] And I lived in the midst of a sea of Italians. [G: Uh huh] They, well of course were in the war with the Germans. So that was the majority of my, as a youngster, daily contact. And otherwise I really didn't experience any of what you are describing.

G: Uh huh. Now were you in the service? [W: Yeah, uh huh] What was your, what was your uh, what did you do in the service? It's interesting that you didn't describe that as a job, but uh (-) [Laughs]

W: Well the [unclear] way of I guess putting it that way. I was in combat infantry in the 40th infantry division [G: uh huh] in the South Pacific.

G: Uh huh. Um, that's unusual isn't it? That mostly you think of the marines in the Pacific.

W: Well that was the media again, but the bulk of the fighting and the bulk of the casualties and you add them all up for the total theater was the army infantry. [G: Uh huh] The times were characterized by certain amount of competitiveness. The army contended they did all the fighting and the marines got all of the publicity and the glory. [G: Yeah] The uh, not to belittle the marine contributions. They were in some very bloody battles, but the bulk of the troops and the bulk of the casualties were experienced by the army infantry.

G: So you were working for, you got this job in Europe and you were working for this other company in Europe before you come on with Sprague. [W: Right] What were the circumstances that would bring you to Sprague?

W: Well as mentioned earlier, the Sprague Electric Company um, passed the Cornell Dublier Electronic Company just a year or two after I had joined them. By this point I had been with them half a dozen years, that is Cornell Dublier. They transferred me into the parent company and into the international division of the parent company, of Federal Pacific Electric. [G: Umhm] And the bulk of their activity was still electric. Electronics was really just beginning in terms of as we know it today. Beyond the radio, television and consumer areas.

G: So what were they doing? Building power transformers and things like that, or?

W: Uh, they didn't build transformers. The U.S. electric industry at that point was ahead in terms of circuit break or technology. And different transmission and distribution devices [G: right, umhm] in the electrical area. And that's what they were transporting over. And that was really the bulk of my work, but building up the electronic presence and capability, which we did.

G: You were doing, you were in charge of the sales force?

W: I was in charge of both, but just um, the foreign aspect of it. Within Germany I covered, because the factory made only electrical equipment. We start with, there was one specialty product there. You had rotating electronic antennas [G: uh huh] which we brought over and assembled, which business I expanded [telephone rings] in that manner. But responsible within Germany for the electronics and responsible for outside of Germany for everything. [G: Uh huh] And then we had a separate German sales manager for the electrical products in Germany.

G: Uh huh. [Clears throat] So (--)

W: So I went to Sprague on the basis that by that time Sprague was much better and stronger and had substantially passed Cornell Dublier in capability and particularly technologically.

G: Were you recruited, or raid, or did you search the map? What was the circumstances of (--)

W: Uh, a little, a little of both. If you remember back in those days.

G: Sounds like head-hunting, some head-hunting going on.

W: Back in those days the talk between companies was not regarded the way it is today.

G: In terms of acrimony, or (--)

W: No, in terms of just exchange of uh, information [G: uh huh] and so forth. Not necessarily collusion, but just to keep from needlessly damaging things at each other. I don't know how to describe it. Other than today I think they wouldn't even dare speak to each other on the phone. Those days, with discretion and uh careful control on what was covered, they'd talk back and forth. And the outlook at Cornell Dublier was not nearly as good as the uh, presence that Sprague wanted to build in the overseas operations. And I had a very good relationship with my you know, former domestic boss with Cornell Dublier and I was largely connected at that time with the electrical end, which had a totally different circumstance. That factory in Germany eventually closed. The Europeans would accept the Americans into the electronic industry because we dominated it. We led by country miles at that time in electronics, but in the electrical not quite the same. And that was the traditional (--)

G: What period are you talking about?

W: This was the early sixties.

G: Yeah, okay.

W: And the Europeans in truth were bound and determined that the Americans would not take over the electrical industry. [G: Uh huh] And with all of these factors put together it just came around the pike that Sprague approached me and I joined them.

G: What position were you offered?

W: European Marketing Manager.

G: And then, and where did you work to do that?

W: Well there was a phase-in cause I was living in Europe and partially commuting to Switzerland, because both with Cornell and with Sprague the legal headquarters was in Switzerland. And for the you know, organizational tax type of purpose operation. And Sprague had an office in Switzerland, which was not too far and it was in Zurich at that time, which was not too far from this Karlsruhe. So initially I lived inbetween where I had lived before and in Zurich and for about a year an a half during which time we sent the local manager that we had in Zurich to the United States for a year while I ran the operation in Europe. Then as we expanded it and developed it on the scene in Europe and then he came back and then, to Europe, to Switzerland and then I came to the United States here in North Adams.

G: When was that that you came to North Adams?

W: Uh, 66.

G: Uh huh. Um, and when you came to North Adams, what um, what was your position? What did you do here?

W: Well, I came back as um, in title actually um, Hemisphere Marketing Manager, which meant, and it covered also Sprague International which was for the Americas and Latin America, exclusive of the USA. And your (--)

G: Did you pick up Spanish too?

W: Well I had lived in Latin America [G: Uh huh] for a year and a half before I went to Europe. I was transferred [G: uh huh] by Cornell Dublier from there to Europe. Actually with a European background and Europe being the real electronic potential market, the company I guess rightfully said, what are we doing with this fellow in Latin America when we want to open up Europe. So within a couple of week of when that realization struck them I was on a boat to Europe.

G: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, so you became in charge of hemisphere operations for Sprague when you came to North Adams.

W: Well I was Sprague World Trade Marketing Manager [G: Uh huh] and Sprague International Marketing Manager, which actually meant the world, but at that time other than a very fledgling and uh, um, a very um, un uh, un (--) I don't know quite how to put it.

G: Undeveloped?

W: Undeveloped is one word. Operation in Hong Kong, a very small plant which subsequently closed. There was nothing in the fareast so and we did almost no business there.

G: Wasn't there a plant in Singapore [unclear]?

W: That was in an interim period fifteen years after the period I'm talking about. A dozen or fifteen years later.

G: Okay. Um, so where was, where were your offices here?

W: Right here in North Adams.

G: Marshall Street?

W: Marshall Street, yeah.

G: On Marshall Street. Um, could you describe what a typical day was like for you when you uh (--)

W: Well a typical day would get into a wide variety, because the days would vary substantially as to whatever was the most pressing and essential activity needing attention for that specific

time frames. But basically the way you would describe the activity would be that essentially, and I worked only overseas as far as ultimate responsibility was concerned even though I had a substantial amount of contact with domestic people both within the company and outside of the company, was that the mission was to develop and carry out plans and programs to penetrate markets with products. Including where necessary the establishment of the organization and the people to accomplish them. That was overseas because of this going back to the initial period, although it applied to the later period too. We essentially had no organization over there. When I joined them they had just representatives and they had a half a dozen people in an administrative activity in a headquarters in Zurich. Additionally it entailed interfacing and where appropriate coordinating with the US domestic marketing manufacturing and sales operations on customers, markets and products for inputs both to the US and then the counterpart inputs and transfer and transmittal to overseas organizations. And within that you'd have to pick the various facets to the activity that there would be. But basically you maintain contact with the various US and overseas entities of our own and outside government and industry organizations. And involved also and the uh, and particularly important in the beginning, but always present and maintained.

side one ends

side two begins

W: Seminars, both for informational um, [few words unclear] promotion. [G: Would these be (--)] Because the US was looked upon still at that time initially and even later, although less so as the technological leader. And that was how we built ourselves up actually. So they played very important roles.

G: Is this a kind um, for the sales force, for the engineering force, or is it a kind of public relations thing, or uh (--)

W: Well as I said, for information and promotion [G: Uh huh] and they took both forms. We invariably gave presentations at the Paris Fair for example, [G: Uh huh] which was the major key electronics exhibition in Europe for many many years. Long before the German electronic car in Munich started. But they, well they actually in Germany had started in the middle sixties, but it didn't amount to anything until the seventies. And you made this for the purpose of transmitting information. What the latest was and what the technology forefront was and what you had in it and what it could do and that type of thing. And in reality that was how we first got started in the market. [G: Umhm] The very first thing which I did when I joined Sprague and then began my activities was in the very first ensuing Paris Fair Exhibition gave a technical paper on higher liability capacitors. They hadn't even heard the word over there much less had anything like it.

G: Where in the world did you pick this up. My understanding was that you did not have a (--)

W: It was to build acceptance and to show your quality level. And we were, we started first in the (--)

G: No, I was thinking of you personally. My understanding was that you did, that your (--)

you have a degree in engineering?
That was not my understanding.

W: No, but I had started. You remember I had said I was first in school, then went into the army and then came back. [G: Uh huh] I had started on the technical end and finished in the commercial end.

G: I see. I see. So you had some background.

W: Yeah, and I had worked in a similar product and industry for a dozen years before I came to Sprague all around the world.

G: Right, so you were just, you were picking up.

W: I became something of I guess you would call it a pseudo- engineer, [G: Uh huh] considering.

G: So you have, you've contributed technical papers and that sort of thing naturally.

W: Well generally the technical papers were in large part written by our complex of engineers and QAR people [G: Uh huh] and so forth, with my contribution in editing and putting it together. In instances the papers were largely written by them, acknowledged as theirs and so forth.

G: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, one of the things that you said, you talked about communication with your other offices and stuff like that being an important function of what you were doing. Is this uh, in this period is this a (--) I mean well now we think of Fax all the time and I don't imagine that was being done much. Is this mostly through letters, correspondence, telephone? Or what was the proportion.?

W: It was all of it, but you hit on the right theme. Again, particularly in the beginning it was a substantial need to educate and develop and in the process motivate and expand the capabilities of the people overseas. So it involved very substantial verbal and written. And verbal, it was telephone and written was Telex. They didn't have Fax, but they had Telex which really worked quite well. All of the offices were set up within the national Telexes. [G: Uh huh] And then a great deal of correspondence too. In fact where the early years kept two secretaries busy with correspondence.

G: Uh huh, which brings me to uh, to the next point in terms thinking about how you spent your working day. What was the sort of, what was the social structure of your working environment. You know, where did you fit in the, where did you fit in the flow chart or pegging order of the corporation? And who were you under? Who did you report to? How many people were directly under you? What was that uh, what was that structure like from your point of view?

W: Well if you remember and I think probably has come out in some of your [few words unclear], Sprague was a company that gave their people great latitude. In fact to the extent, I

think you probably are aware of this but would repeat it, an organization chart did not even exist in Sprague until um, the um, General Cable Company came on the scene. But you still knew where you belonged and what you were doing and that intent was to give you freedom of action and avoid this it's not my job [G: right] routine, which the other can induce and let occur. So that my actual boss was the president of the Sprague World Trade and Sprague International Company who resided in Zurich, Switzerland. Well in later years in Geneva, Switzerland. The headquarters in that interim period had been moved. With sort of a oversight delegation to the Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing here in the U.S. So I rather had to satisfy both.

G: Uh huh. Uh huh. And you said that you had two secretaries who were immediately working for you. Were there any other people in other positions that you immediately supervised?

W: Well in the initial period is responsible for the administration, but the operation continually changed over the years as we expanded. [G: Uh huh] And the position went from a line and supervision to a combination line and staff operation [G: right] both here and overseas. And I said without an organization chart there really weren't any fine lines drawn that way. [G: Right] I could give direction and require performance from a variety of people and a variety of things. And the scope covered this type of stand.

G: Umhm, umhm. Where in this process did you pick up your MBA? [Laughs]

W: Oh that goes, that goes way back to the incident. I started it when I was at this Hoover Company and then (--)

G: That's a long commute.

W: No, that was in New Jersey and I lived at the time in East Orange, New Jersey. [G: Uh huh] The completion, it took you know, you had to write a MBA dissertation. That took in itself while working and I always traveled a lot during all of this time. It took a year and a half or so. I barely beat the deadline. I think the requirement was two years or something that you had to finish it within and five years I think it was from start until you finish your masters. So that it lapsed over into Cornell Dublier and I finished the masters while I was at Cornell Dublier. In the, I started 51 and then finished in the middle 50's. And then I taught. There was always this idea of education will always benefit you and your you know, future career. I decided for myself that all maybe well and good and true, but I was going to make it specifically pay back. And there was a shortage of instruction at that time anyway, as you recall. This we in the early middle 50's period, [G: Right] where there was still at the college level particularly a shortage of teaching. So then I started teaching at Rutger's University evenings for, until I went, until the years before I went overseas actually, all through the middle and late 50's. And I would sometimes have to (--)

G: Busy schedule.

W: Give a class and take a plane at 10:00 at night and go to Washington and come back two days later and gone into the class from the airport and teach the end of the weeks class.

G: I'm doing a lot of that. Mostly the thing that I worry about is to have the right papers in the right place. [Laughs]

W: I use to carry big suitcases.

G: Yeah. Um, when were you married?

W: 1950.

G: 1950. And where is your wife from?

W: The same general area. Actually we met at Syracuse.

G: Uh huh, uh huh. You met at college.

W: Well we really met on the Jersey shore, but because we were both from Syracuse.

G: Whereabouts in Jersey?

W: Um, I think it was Seaside Heights if I remember correctly.

G: Right where expected. I've been in Massachusetts for seven years and I still spend my summers on the Jersey shore. That's why I had to ask. [Laughs]

W: That's interesting. We do too! For twenty years after I came back.

G: I have never been to Cape Cod.

W: Oh, well I've been there half a dozen (--) Not have, a dozen or two times. [G: Yeah] Then I have a daughter living in Boston too, but even before that. But for our own vacations, yeah. Every year for (--) After we came back to this country every year, and I rarely ever took my full vacation all the years I was at Sprague, but I always did take one week and that was always at the Jersey shore. So it's the same thing. Very interesting. It's what you get use to I guess.

G: Yeah. They said people from Jersey there, of course they've worn the sand in your shoes.

W: And the water was a little warmer and more comfortable. That was part of it too.

G: Yeah, that's nice. Nice. We go to Wildwood because they have such a long beach. [W: Yeah] Um, let's see. Um, how would you describe your relationship with the people with whom you worked at Sprague over the years?

W: I'd say good. I'm both in the U.S. and abroad and I'm still in contact with many of them.

G: Is there any sort of (--)

W: Both abroad and here.

G: Is there anything that stands out in terms of your working relations with people over the years from Sprague?

W: Well um, only in the context that as I hear and view what seems to be the nature and character of such a relationship in today's business circumstance, I think it was a more honest and friendly relationship that we had here. I don't think there was the cut throat, competitiveness and um, that uh, that whole realm of atmosphere which I think is much more pronounced today. At that time it was I think a much nicer and a more honest, open circumstance.

G: Um, when you first came to work in North Adams where did you live?

W: Well I, for several months until we found a place to live I actually lived in the Bennington Y. Or not the Bennington Y, the North Adams Y, the old one that they tore down, they still had rooms there. [G: Uh huh] And uh, then the real estate market may be hard to visualize today, but the real estate market in this area was more expensive and less available in this specific general area. And in consequence we wound up in Bennington. [G: Uh huh] I like the idea of living in Vermont anyway, [G: Yeah] but the practicality drove us up there. [G: Uh huh, uh huh] Taxes were considerably less at that time as well.

G: Um, would you say that your, that your closest friends you developed on the job or off the job?

W: I'd say there was a mixture of both, but probably more off the job. [G: Uh huh] The closest friends on the overseas basis would have been from the job though.

G: Uh huh. But once you got here [W: yeah] you started developing friendships in the community and [word or two unclear].

W: So forth, yeah.

G: Yeah. Uh, what, what did you, or what do you do off the job? What are your, you know what were your past times.

W: Well during that period? Well in North Adams (--)

G: Once you came to North Adams? Did you work an eighty hour week, or (--) It sounds like you might have.

W: Well not very far from it. [G: Yeah] I calculated at different stages and then finally when I retired that my average week while at Sprague was over seventy hours a week. [G: Uh huh] And that even permitted or allowed the last couple of years it fell down to about sixty-five. So it will give you an idea what the first fifteen to sixteen, seventeen were like. So that it didn't allow an awful lot of time, but still [G: uh huh] I tried to do a little bit of everything. And I did some craftsmanship in terms of I built a remote controlled planes and boats with my son and wound up

having to do half or more of them, [G: uh huh] but he learned it. I had a large model train layout, all equipment which at that time you could buy extremely inexpensively in Europe with the exchange. [G: Right] And inflation hadn't fully hit yet and I bought and brought all that in. [G: Uh huh] We had a large layout that way. And I built a little shop behind our garage. And my son and I built a uh, an English sailboat and brought the material and plans over from Europe. I did, built my own archery equipment. This was usually with my, the children, my son. [G: Umhm, yeah, yeah]. Did a certain amount of hunting. Couldn't get to go often. Marksmanship, [G: Right] both archery and with the fire arms. And then we tried to stay sports active to the extent that we tried to sail with the boat and go swimming.

G: Where did you sail?

W: Usually the lakes up in Vermont, [name of lake unclear], Catherine. Even when we didn't have the time, which was often, we'd go to Little Pond up off of Route 9 outside of Bennington, and so forth. We had a canoe and we'd do that. Do a little fishing. So it was just about everything, but with relatively little time for it.

G: Um, did you belong to any clubs, organizations, associations, civic groups, political groups, or anything of that nature?

W: You know, there were some and um, the cross section of them were partially professional and partially private. [G: Private] Belonged to the AMA, American Marketing and Management Associations. Some school alumni groups. The VFW. You know, [G: Local?] the Veteran, yeah. YMCA, Rod and Gun Club. And at different times The Elks, The Moose, The Boy Scouts even. I've been an eagle scout with three palms and I directed my son into. So I'd spend a little time where I could for that. And there were others, but that's sort of a cross section. [G: Uh huh] I didn't have the time to get heavily involved in you know, these time consuming civic activities and groups.

G: I'm amazed at how much you did do. Um, the time you spent at work, was this, were these out of (--) What was motivated you about this? Was it a feeling of obligation, or there was no way for it to be avoided, or uh, what was that about?

W: Well, all of the above. [G: Uh huh] The operation was a new beginning operation and it really needed that type of thing to first get it off the ground and then keep it continuing and stay ahead of the you know, ever encroaching competition. And as you know today America's position in electronics is not at all what it was when I started in it in the 50's and 60's. So it was always keeping at it with all of these new factors appearing on the scene. And Sprague was a good company to work for. I have only pleasant memories of them, despite the extremely hard work connected with it. And so I was glad to do it. I would have liked to have had more time to myself, but it was always a feeling of detracting so much from what really had to be done, how it had to be done. To give you an idea when I joined the Sprague Electric Company in '65 their total, their total business outside to confines of the U.S. was three and a half million dollars. And when I left them twenty years later it was a hundred and fifty-five million dollars. That meant a lot of overtime. [G: Umhm] Not to say that I did it all, but I am sure I would be credited with our management or by our management as having been a major contributor.

G: Did working this much, do you think it put any stresses on your personal life in any way?

W: Well yeah, and also in the physical light. But um, yeah that question has been asked many times, particularly including the fact that I spent about a third of my time traveling mostly overseas. [G: Uh huh, uh huh] But it came in good contexts let's say, because I would go two or three times a year overseas invariably for a month or more, rarely for only a couple of weeks and then I'd be home the rest of the time. The other men were in and out so often they never really knew when they were going to be where and for how long. In that context actually mine was better as I saw it. [G: Umhm umhm] And also experienced this and this was partly also of the fact while I was living overseas with my family and you know, my children were all overseas with us it actually heightened the activity level and the enjoyment when you were together, because you were away a lot. It wasn't quite as routine and as mundane. And we did other things and we made a point to go and to things that [G: umhm] if you were home all the time would just rather slip by. So that the answer to the question you raised is yes and no, but I think it actually was a net benefit [G: uh huh] in the overall long run.

G: Uh, what? Uh, I'm trying (--) I'm thinking about the amount of time that you put in. And most of my experience, although you know I do a lot of scholarly work where I spend you know, a hundred and twenty hours a week on it, but I don't think about it much. On the other hand for a good chunk of my life I've been an hourly rate employee. And the idea of you know, putting in one minute more than forty hours, it was uh, really [unclear]. I mean I would do it if I needed the money and had the opportunity, but overtime was overtime and you got paid for it. And the idea of uh (--) I read about Wall Street executives all the time now putting in seventy and eighty hours weeks and stuff like that. And uh (--)

W: I understand what you're saying.

G: What did you, what did you actually (--) If you would to say you were putting in a sixty-five hour week, you would come in like seven in the morning and stay till seven at night, that sort of thing?

W: No, I kept it (--) Well your punching the clock shows itself here. [G: Yeah, yeah] So you have to look at the structure of what this time was.

G: Yeah that's one of the things that I've been trying to get at is [few words unclear] what did you do?

W: You put in you know, well it depends on whether you're an early riser or late worker. [G: Right] I was not an early riser. So I would just as often come in a half an hour late as on time. [G: Right] But then I wouldn't leave usually until six to seven o'clock [G: right] and get home in time for a late dinner. And pack up a suitcase full of papers, take it back with me for a couple of hours [G: homework] and work well up to midnight. [G: Right, yeah] And double that on weekends. [G: Right, right] And you know that's the manner in which it added up. [G: Uh huh] Very often I never even went to lunch until I started going to the "Y" and that was for a different motive. [G: Umhm, umhm] And included in that time was as I said, I traveled a third

of the time. I essentially was working in the respect that I did my traveling always on my own time. [G: Umhm] I geared my schedules when I was overseas or here so that I arrived at night the night before so I had a full day to work [G: right] and didn't leave until the day was over and took an evening flight to the next place or home, whatever it was. That was all overtime work. [G: Right] You don't find many doing that today, but if you do it that way those hours add up.

G: Right, exactly. Um, when did you leave Sprague?

W: In January of '85.

G: Uh huh. Was that, that was when they had the (--)

W: Officially there were a few months before there where we knew what was going to occur [sound of phone ringing] and I was preparing to leave.

G: Uh huh. That was when they, when they shut down Marshall Street?

W: No I think they shut that down a little later. I was more in the earlier wave. I guess there was three or four waves and I think I might have been in the second or the first, however you paraphrase it.

G: Uh huh. Um, how do you feel about Sprague pulling out of Marshall Street?

W: Well I think it's unfortunate for both the area and as it has turned out for Sprague also. So that other than the fact that I think changes needed to be made, it resulted unfortunately as said, both for the area and for Sprague itself.

G: Umhm. Do you think that they could, might have had the way to stay?

W: Well most things are always possible if you have the [G: the will] right (--) Well the will and if you have the right formula. [G: Uh huh] And there's, there was then, I think there still is now the basic question of where did that either motive or directive come from? Did it come (--) I was not that close to the top that I can conclusively say. [G: Uh huh] It was always the question, but it was largely from the new owners, meaning Penn Central [G: Right] or whether it was the new management, but with a directive from the new owners. [G: Uh huh] That I think is all still a question.

G: Um, what about MoCA?

W: Well I talked with you about the article that was in the New York Times here. [G: Uh huh] I think they raised some legitimate questions, although I think they were overly critical and unenthusiastic or say not very optimistic about it. I think it would be marvelous for the area if it is in fact financially viable and can succeed.

G: Do you think it can?

W: I really don't think I'm conversant enough or knowledgeable enough about the subject to offer a, I think an intelligent statement to that effect. I would worry a little bit that it might die of anemia in the sense of the times being a budget crunch and rising taxes here, whether what it would really need to succeed will actually go into it in the light of those circumstances. The numbers given in, well what I have read and heard elsewhere and as well repeated in this article here may be sufficient, may not do the trick. Will they get the supplement if it turns out they need just a little bit more to get it through and get it going such that it can then propel itself and be successful from its inertia or you know, initiative as put into it to give it its start? Hard to say. I'd be very happy to see it here and succeed.

G: Um, the uh, subtitle of the project that I'm working on, "Shifting Gears", is called "The Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts 1920-1980". And basically the reason why we are conducting all of these oral histories is to try and get an answer to that question. So every (--) It came up (--) Once a month (--) We have half a dozen scholars all over the state that are doing the same thing I'm doing. And every month we get together and we talk about this. And one fellow said uh, we need to figure out how to get at this question when we're doing our oral histories, "The Changing Meaning of Work". And I obviously you know, looking at the obvious answer, well why don't we ask the people we're interviewing how's the meaning of work changing? He said, well, he said, they'll just stare at you, they won't give you a straight answer. I never, I think that was a demeaning reaction. And I said no, I'm going to ask them. [Laughs] Uh, so uh, I've always asked this. Now very [unclear] when I ask people, what do you, how do you think the meaning of work has changed in North Adams since 1920? Very often people say, well what do you mean? I throw it right back in their lap and say, I'm not sure what I mean. Take it for whatever. What do you think it means? And try to deal with that as a kind of way of organizing. You're thinking about this. I would like you to do some thinking about that question. How has the meaning of work changed in North Adams? I would like you to think about it in terms of your own experience. That is not in terms of production line work that you were interacting with all the time, or not in terms of things you may have read in management journals and things like that, but in terms of your work and people that you worked with from the time you started your work. Like how has the meaning of (--) In other words what I'm saying is from a totally subjective point of view, not pulling it from some scholarly or academic journals that you may have read, but from a totally subjective point of view. How has the meaning of work changed for you since you started working, if at all?

W: Well you get into a arena that could be almost day long, short dialogue and debate [G: well give me five minutes] and getting infinite variety of cause and effect and factors. But if you want to put it into a single major point that automatically and immediately comes to me and uh, and not in that saying that is the only, but at least from a initial basic point I think it's the work ethics. And that [G: you think that is true] in itself covers a great many things and reasons therefore positive and negative. But I think that. And I think that has substantially deteriorated over the years. [G: Do you think that's] I wasn't around in 1920, [G: Sure, but you] but in my period [G: yeah, we're talking your] is the way I see it.

G: Uh, well do you think that is true of (--) [Pause] Do you think that's true of people who are working at your level, as people that you worked with immediately under, over you, alongside you, at your type of work?

W: Well I think it's applicable to all three, [G: Uh huh] above, even and below, just with different manifestations in different ways. And um, I think a correlated and simultaneous point that needs to be raised along with that and as said to get into discussing, discussion of it I think would be almost infinite, is the competitive pressures of today. And whether they are inside the company or outside the company and that's another factor that has substantially changed as I see it in my experience. And between those two I think that is a major portion of it. Then I think you would have to start detailing that. Those were the big points that has occurred to me in the question you've raised.

G: Almost everybody, almost everybody brings this up which is why there is a problem with it. Alright. I mean I've talked to people, I've talked to everybody from janitors to vice-presidents alright. Everybody, you know (--) Now the problem with that is if everybody is bringing it up and I've got a pretty good sample, alright.

W: How many of these types of interviews that would relate to this? Actually I'm just curious. [G: What's that?] Just curious as to how many of the total interviews on this type of subject you've actually given that would (--)

G: Me? Forty or fifty.

W: Okay. Well that is then considering the position range it covers, yes, this would interest me. [G: Yeah, yeah] That's why I asked, because that seems to be the universal reaction.

G: Now everybody (--) See, the first thing (--) Yeah, the first thing that comes out is that, which is like frankly I mistrust it and I'll tell you why. I mean it's sort of liked um, well it must (--) Is it always the other you know, my immediate reaction is, is it always the other guy, or you know, it's everybody else there who's you know? [Laughs]

W: Yup, well and obviously I say well I worked seventy, seventy-five hours a week so it must have been the other guy.

G: Yeah. Or I get a lot of that too you see, exactly. You know, they (--)

W: But no, it's much more complex than that.

G: Yeah, well that's what I'm trying to (--)

W: Especially the competitive pressures aspect. That's a whole new, a whole new world.

G: Uh huh, you mean just there is a lot more stress and then more in society.

W: Well that, then there needs to be, well it relates then back to the fact that the work ethics has to be better, because you have this heightened and we're far more um, requirements, demands to um, to improve and to develop your competitive capability. Then you know they're heavily inter-related. [G: Uh huh] One has gone down, the other has gone up. And then so there's (--)

G: But in fact those are psychological pressures though.

W: That's included.

G: In terms of what kind of stresses can make human beings to cope with.

W: Yes, yes, of course, yeah.

G: Um, can you think of any other people, particular individuals who you know of who would be a really good idea for me to interview that you know, or (--)

W: You mean in the Sprague uh (--)

G: Who worked for Sprague. You know, who worked at Marshall Street and (--)

W: Well since your particular interest and concern seems to be on this latter question here, it would seem plausible that you would talk to the people in the labor relations and the personnel department, a few of their key staff there.

G: Umhm. Um (--)

W: You could do that from North Adams or at the local factories.

G: Yeah, actually I have talked to a lot, I have talked to a lot of them, [few words unclear]

W: [Few words unclear]. Oh, okay.

G: Yeah, I was wondering. One of the (--) I think as a group the one category that I've sort of leaned on is upper and middle level management. And I was wondering if (--) And the other is like is very young workers. Those two, those two groups I just don't have as much on as other groups. Um, and I was wondering if you might you know, know people, especially the first category.

W: Well I think it's a good selection um, cause you get the two opposite ends of the spectrum. There's the young worker and the old management.

G: I have, in fact, a matter of fact, I have people from (--) Because I'm focusing really not on Sprague, but on Marshall Street. Alright. And so I have people who worked there when it was all print works in the twenties and thirties. I have people who worked there in the, from the forties to the eighties. And then work, industrial work force, office workers. I have the people who were union activists [phone rings] from the forties all the way up through the eighties. And I have personnel, I have people who were in man, a few management people. And the one group of people that I don't have and I'm really interested is people (--) I don't have a single example of this, is the people who were layed off when Marshall Street shut down. I would like to be able to talk to somebody who was in that circumstance. To get their feelings and point of view about

that experience. Um, and I would like and the group I'm leanest on as a category, I have a few but not enough would be management people. So those are the, those are the two categories I'm sort of flashing out more. The other thing I'm doing is because I'm looking at Marshall Street, it came on me to interview people who are working there now. And I'm interviewing, I'm starting to interview MoCA people. What it's like to work at Marshall Street now. You know, so to get, so to get what it was like at Arnold Print Works and what it was like at Sprague and what it was like at (--)

W: Yeah, an interesting evolution. [G: yeah] The difference in activity and time frame should make an interesting cross section.

G: Uh, do you have any pictures or other memorabilia from when you worked at Sprague?

W: I was never too big on that. I have all sorts of things at home. Odds and ends and some different photographs which I have never organized or collected or put together anywhere, both from here but even more so abroad. [G: Uh huh] But uh, I've never paid much attention to them. I'm not quite yet at the stage where I look through my old scrapbook.

G: Right, right. The reason I asked is that I'm conducting a major, a major collection of (--)
The second most important thing I'm doing besides oral interviews [W: uh huh] is collecting visual images. And uh, on the 16th we're going to have a Photo Festival Day here. And what we're (--)

W: This month?

G: Yes. It's a Sunday afternoon and we're, actually I could do this for you anytime, but we're going to do this especially on the 16th. What we are going to do is a the photographer here. People who bring their photographs in we will take pictures of your photograph. And for the trouble of letting them (--)
And then you can immediately have it back right then. [W: Umhm]
And for the trouble of letting us do that we will give you an additional copy. Uh, and we're, what (--)
The reason I'm doing it is to collect the photographs. I mean I can show you. I've collected things from various places. These are, these are MoCA photographs. [W: Umhm]
Actually really well done. Um, these were done for the MoCA. This is, this is, these are beautiful [unclear].

W: Oh Lord. I can remember tracing through these places. A little bit of nostalgia really.

G: Yeah. Now this is, this is [unclear]. This was the Arnold Print Works. They had a tramway.

W: Oh yeah I remember that store.

G: They had a tramway across the yard.

W: Really? That I don't remember.

G: You could move material so that they would have to take up and down the stairs.

W: How about that. That's the original Swiss sky toe.

G: Yeah. This is a sketch that was done in 1928. See, the [unclear] is different here.

W: Oh, but still you can identify it.

G: Yeah, umhm.

W: Yup.

G: This is 1962.

W: [Comment unclear]

G: This is the [tantalum?] department, Marshall Street. This is leaving, leaving the plant. This is when the cafeteria was knew. That's Bill Stackpole who was the head of the union, the first union.

W: Stackpole. Sprague had a small competitor called the Stackpole Company. I wonder if he was any relation?

G: Man that's interesting. This is Al Nelson.

W: [Comment unclear]

G: This is fascinating. Nobody knows about this. I discovered this. Sprague had a town symphony orchestra in 1946.

W: No, no, that predated me. Hm.

G: This is a wonderful shot. This is Brown Street. This is the [unclear] winding on Brown Street, 42.

W: Well in those days they still filled it up. [Laughs]

G: A lot of garbage on the floor too anyway.

W: Well they're winding here [G: yeah] and uh, you know, there was always, they always had to rip off strips. That's typical of the operation.

G: You know any of these fellows?

W: Um, yeah, I forget his name. And this fellow looks familiar, but I can't think of his name either. These two I know, but I don't recall the names.

G: [Comment unclear].

W: He was in the set up for putting up plants in factories. He went to Europe first couple of times to do that.

G: A Sprague party. [W: Yeah] Uh, these are the, this is the Arnold Print Works.

W: They had some pretty massive uh (--)

G: Yeah, that's pretty astonishing isn't it! [Laughs]

W: It looks like um, machines to (--)

G: Yeah this is the bleaching vat.

W: Yeah. They're the similar operations that actually even went on into electronics. It's interesting as well. And I guess that's why that science was so uh (--)

G: A flow process, yeah.

W: Yeah, and they had to have electrolytic tanks and things. [G: Umhm] And then they the big formation tanks here too.

G: Right. These are the, that's the [unclear]. That's [Beagle?] Street after the 1927 flood.

W: Oh yeah.

G: There's some more Arnold Print Work stuff. I got these. These photographs were a real [unclear].

W: How many people did Arnold Print Works employ at their height?

G: About 5,000 I think.

W: It was that many?

G: Yeah.

W: Oh Lord, what a come down?

G: Yeah. These are draftsmen at Arnold Print Works here.

W: Uh huh. Well what has happened to Arnold Print Works today? I know they have a little bit here, but is the company uh, for all practical purposes done, or?

G: Well [they probably?] burnt down. It's finished. As a matter of fact, this guy in Adams here,

he's trying to save that business. Save the building.

W: What did it do to them, other companies or foreign competition? I'm not that familiar with that industry that I really know why they failed.

G: I think it must have been foreign competition, which finally was [unclear]. It was interesting why they finally pulled out of Marshall Street, because I just learned that this morning. It was 1942 and they couldn't get any orders during the war because all of the materials was going for the war effort. And that was, to print material was frivolous, you know. It was always you know, cashy and that's it you know? So they couldn't get orders. These are really astonishing flood pictures.

W: No idea about that flood. Heard stories about it, but [few words unclear].

G: This is the back of the, this is the back of Marshall Street. It took the entire wall off.

W: Yeah, the damage. Yeah!

G: Again these are more (--) These guys look like they're working pretty [unclear].

W: I've seen some of the pictures of that period in Vermont and I guess you had it just as much.

G: This is a, that's a pretty, pretty picture.

W: Well I don't have anything that I can recall of of this, of this type of thing. I have some [rest of comment unclear].

G: That's River Street in the back [few words unclear].

W: Yeah and one piece went down.

G: Took right down, yeah. That's the original plant being built in 1862. This is a nice shot before flood control.

W: Yeah. You've got quite a collection.

G: Yeah, I just (--)

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